

**REPRESENTATION OF MODERATE ISLAM IN LITERARY TEXTS BY  
GUS MUS AND THEIR RELEVANCE AS TEACHING MATERIALS IN HIGH  
SCHOOLS**

---

**Shidiq Ardianta, Erisy Syawiril Ammah, Lidia Maziyyatun Nikmah**  
**Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achamad Siddiq Jember**  
**(Naskah diterima: 1 January 2026, disetujui: 28 January 2026)**

**Abstract**

*This study examines the representation of moderate Islam in literary texts written by Gus Mus and its relevance as teaching materials in senior high schools. The research aims to identify forms of moderate Islamic values and analyze their suitability for literature learning at the secondary education level. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method using text analysis of selected literary works by Gus Mus and document analysis of the senior high school curriculum. The findings indicate that Gus Mus's literary texts represent moderate Islam through values of tolerance, humanism, balance, and inclusivity. These values are relevant to support character education and strengthen religious moderation in senior high school learning contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic moderation; literary texts; literature learning; senior high school*

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi Islam moderat dalam teks sastra karya Gus Mus serta relevansinya sebagai bahan ajar di Sekolah Menengah Atas. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengidentifikasi bentuk nilai-nilai Islam moderat dan menganalisis kesesuaiannya dalam pembelajaran sastra di tingkat SMA. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik analisis teks terhadap karya sastra Gus Mus dan analisis dokumen kurikulum SMA. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teks sastra Gus Mus merepresentasikan Islam moderat melalui nilai toleransi, humanisme, keseimbangan, dan inklusivitas. Nilai-nilai tersebut relevan untuk mendukung pendidikan karakter dan penguatan moderasi beragama dalam pembelajaran sastra di SMA.

**Kata Kunci:** Islam moderat; pembelajaran sastra; sastra; sekolah menengah atas

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The discourse of moderate Islam has become a strategic issue in the social, cultural, and educational contexts in Indonesia, particularly amidst the growing polarization of religious understanding that often leads to exclusivity and intolerance. The world of education, particularly secondary education, plays a crucial role in instilling the values of religious moderation through various contextual and humanistic learning media. Literature, as a cultural product that represents human social and spiritual realities, has great potential to

serve as a medium for the internalization of moderate Islamic values through reflective and dialogical means. In this context, the literary works of K.H. Mustofa Bisri (Gus Mus) occupy a crucial position because they combine aesthetic expression, spiritual depth, and an inclusive Islamic message.

Gus Mus is known as a religious scholar, cultural figure, and writer who consistently advocates a friendly, tolerant, and humanitarian-oriented Islam. Through his poetry, short stories, and essays, Gus Mus presents Islam as a teaching that emphasizes compassion (rahmah), balance (tawazun), and social justice. These values align with the spirit of religious moderation, currently a primary focus of national education policy. However, the use of Gus Mus's literary works as teaching materials in high schools (SMA) remains relatively limited and has not been systematically studied in the context of literature learning.

Theoretically, the concept of moderate Islam refers to an understanding of Islam that follows the middle path (wasathiyyah), rejects extremism, and upholds tolerance, dialogue, and respect for differences. From a literary perspective, literary texts are understood not only as aesthetic works but also as representations of the author's ideology, values, and worldview. Therefore, an analysis of Gus Mus's literary texts can reveal how moderate Islamic values are represented through symbols, metaphors, themes, and narratives. In an educational context, literary learning theory emphasizes the importance of selecting teaching materials that not only meet linguistic and aesthetic requirements but are also relevant to the development of students' character. Integrative literary learning enables students to develop critical thinking skills, empathy, and social awareness. Therefore, literary works embodying moderate Islamic values have the potential to be an effective means of strengthening character education and religious moderation in high schools.

Despite the growing urgency of religious moderation in education, there remains limited research specifically addressing the representation of moderate Islam in contemporary Indonesian literary texts and their relevance as teaching materials in high schools. Literature instruction in schools often focuses on structural and linguistic aspects, while the value and ideological dimensions of the texts are not optimally utilized. This situation raises questions about how moderate Islamic values are represented in Gus Mus's literary works and the extent to which these works are relevant for implementation as teaching materials at the high school level.

Normatively (*das sollen*), high school education is expected to instill the values of religious moderation, tolerance, and inclusive attitudes through contextual and meaningful learning processes. Literature, as part of Indonesian language learning, should be utilized as a medium for internalizing these values. However, empirically (*das sein*), literature instruction in high schools is still dominated by a textual-formal approach and does not adequately connect the texts to issues of moderate Islam and the social realities of students. Furthermore, Gus Mus's literary works, which are imbued with moderate Islamic values, have not been systematically used as teaching materials. This gap underlies the need for this research.

Previous research has shown that literary works can be an effective medium for developing students' character and religious values. Several studies have examined Gus Mus's moderate Islamic thought from the perspective of *da'wah* and theology, while others have discussed literary works as teaching materials for character education. However, studies that specifically integrate the analysis of representations of moderate Islam in Gus Mus's literary texts with their relevance as teaching materials in high school are still limited. The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive examination of Gus Mus's literary texts as representations of moderate Islam while simultaneously formulating their relevance in the context of literature learning in high school.

Based on this description, this study aims to (1) describe the representation of moderate Islamic values in Gus Mus's literary texts and (2) analyze their relevance as teaching materials for literature learning in high school. It is hoped that this research will provide theoretical contributions to the study of literature and education, as well as practical contributions to the development of teaching materials based on religious moderation.

## **II. THEORETICAL STUDIES**

### **1. Definition of Moderate Islam**

The word "moderate" refers to several dictionaries as referring to the meanings of "views" and "attitudes." In this case, "non-extreme" views and attitudes can understand differences and accept or respect differing opinions. In current common usage, the term "moderate Islam," in its current sense, refers to a form of Islamic understanding that rejects the violent methods employed by groups who adhere to radical Islam.

Taufik Hamid, a former member of the Egyptian radical Islamist group *al-Jamaah al-Islamiyyah*, defines moderate Islam as "a form of Islam that rejects violent and

discriminatory edicts." This definition explicitly rejects religious laws that condone violence and discrimination. (See his article "Don't Gloss Over The Violent Texts" in the Wall Street Journal, September 1, 2010.)

Another definition is proposed by Dr. Moqtedar Khan, who runs the Ijtihad blog ([www.ijtihad.org](http://www.ijtihad.org)). Dr. Khan explained that moderate Islam emphasizes the importance of the principle of ijtihad in a broader sense, namely freedom of expression while still relying on the primary sources of Islam, namely the Quran and Sunnah. Interestingly, many modern Muslims attempt to link this concept of "moderate Islam" with the concept of "wasat" (intelligible text) found in the Quran. In the Quran, there is a verse often quoted by modern Muslim intellectuals to demonstrate the fundamental nature of Islam as a "middle" or moderate religion. This verse is Surah al-Baqarah, verse 143, which states: "And thus I (God) have made you a just, moderate, and best nation, that you may be witnesses (martyrs) for all mankind, and that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be a witness (martyr) for you." (Surah al-Baqarah, verse 143).

## 2. Definition of Literature

Literature has a dual function: to entertain and to benefit. Literature entertains by presenting beauty and providing meaning to life. The process of creating literary works is essentially a process of imagination. This is in line with the understanding of fictional prose, namely a series of stories played by a number of actors in a certain sequence of events and based on a certain setting as a result of the author's imagination.

Literary works serve the function of conveying the ideas or thoughts of a writer of poetry, prose, and drama. These ideas can take the form of social, political, cultural, and defense and security critiques related to issues surrounding their environment. The effort to express these ideas or thoughts through literary works can be considered a creative effort by a writer to engage readers in discussing current issues in life.

Based on this opinion, it can be concluded that literature is an imaginative work in the form of beautiful, entertaining writing or language, reflecting the life experiences of its creator. Beautiful language can evoke emotional resonance in readers and listeners, giving rise to feelings of emotion, affection, hatred, anxiety, resentment, and so on.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The object of this research is the representation of moderate Islamic values in literary texts by (Gus Mus). The research subjects were purposively selected literary texts by Gus Mus, such as poetry, short stories, or literary-religious essays embodying the values of tolerance, humanism, justice, balance, and anti-violence. This study utilized two types of data sources: primary data in the form of quotations from Gus Mus's literary texts, and secondary data in the form of literary theory books, studies on moderate Islam, curriculum documents (Independence Curriculum/K13), and literature on literature learning in high schools. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive analysis model that includes: To ensure data validity, this study utilized: theoretical triangulation, which involves comparing the analysis results with various theories of moderate Islam and literature; diligent observation through repeated reading of the texts; and adequate references to strengthen interpretations.

### IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

#### 1. Representation of Moderate Islamic Values in Literary Texts by Gus Mus

After examining the texts repeatedly, it was discovered that several of Gus Mus's literary works contain moderate Islamic teachings. This moderation is evident in the author's stance, represented in the literary content, which rejects all forms of worship practices and extreme left- and right-wing Islamic understanding. This extreme left-wing is defined as an understanding of Islam that tends to be liberal, free, and deviates from the teachings of the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jamaah. Meanwhile, this extreme right-wing is defined as a ideology that tends to be harsh and contradicts the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jamaah.

**Table 1. Literary Works by Gus Mus Containing Moderate Islamic Teachings**

No.	Jenis	Judul	Keterangan
1.	puisi	Aku Rindu o Muhammadku	Menolak ekstrem kanan
2.	puisi	Kaum beragama negeri ini	Menolak ekstrem kanan
3.	puisi	Puisi Islam	Menolak ekstrem kanan
4.	cerpen	Gus Jakfar	Menolak ekstrem kanan
5.	cerpen	Kang Maksum	Menolak ekstrem kiri
6.	cerpen	Teroris	Menolak ekstrem kanan
7.	Cerpen	Mbok Yem	Menolak ekstrem kanan

Moderate Islamic teachings, or Islam that does not embrace extreme views, either left or right, are found in several of Gus Mus's literary works. He incorporates these teachings into fiction and poetry. In fiction, Gus Mus incorporates them in several short stories, including "Gus Jakfar, Kang Maksum, Teroris, Mak Iyem."

Moderate Islamic teachings are also embedded in Gus Mus's poetry. One poem embodying moderate Islamic teachings is "Aku Rindu o Muhammadku." In embedding moderate Islam in poetry, he generally employs satirical diction. This satirical diction is generally conveyed in simple language, as in the poem "Muslims in My Country." In this poem, Gus Mus embeds the message of Islamic moderation in the realm of human-human and human-God relationships.

Gus Mus's concern is clear when he addresses Muslims in Indonesia, and this is explicitly stated in the title. Gus Mus is a native Indonesian citizen. Therefore, the word "negara" refers to the country where he lives, namely Indonesia.

From an extrinsic perspective, Gus Mus's writing about moderation can be viewed from several aspects, including his education, religion, and the dominant social context of his writing. From an intrinsic perspective, the teachings of moderation are clearly evident in how Gus Mus constructs the plot and ending of the story, through the characters' characters, and through their actions. In the short story "Kang Maksum," Gus Mus teaches moderation by rejecting extreme left-wing views or free practices in worship. At the end of the story, Gus Mus emphasizes his rejection of Kang Maksum's behavior with a story about a death that is far from husnul khotimah (a good end).

*...In fact, many Islamic boarding school students (santri) want to learn martial arts and Kang Maksum's fate. However, most are unable to maintain his asceticism. If, for example, they simply fasted as usual, many would be able to do so. This is not the case. There is putih fasting, fasting by breaking the fast with just rice, without using any side dishes, for 7 days or 40 days. There is ngebleng fasting, fasting one day and one night without breaking the fast. There is pati geni fasting, not only fasting one day and one night without breaking the fast, but also without sleeping. Imagine*

*Kang Maksum himself is an expert in penance. Since who knows how old, it is said that he has been growing up since he was little. Not only fasting ndaud, one day of*

*fasting one day of breaking the fast, but not of breaking the fast only with tubers or bulgur (Kang Maksum's short story).*

In the short story excerpt above, "Kang Maksum" depicts Kang Maksum as a devout man, but ultimately dies in vain. Some suspect suicide, while others suspect an accident while attempting to practice occultism. However, both assumptions suggest that Kang Maksum died in vain. This short story demonstrates that Gus Mus, while disapproving of extreme right-wing religious practices, also disapproved of religious practices that deviate from Islamic teachings, such as fasting (ngebleng), fasting (pati nggeni), and so on. This demonstrates that Gus Mus was a moderate figure who opposed deviant Islamic teachings.

*Kang Zuhdi, an alumnus of our Islamic boarding school and more senior than Kang Maksum and Kang Sofwan, attempted to convince the public that the late Kang Maksum deliberately allowed himself to be run over by a train to test his "knowledge."*

*"I heard that Kang Maksum had previously allowed himself to be run over by bicycles, motorcycles, horse-drawn carts, and trucks. And so far, he has been unscathed, no harm done."*

*"So," continued Kang Zuhdi, "it's most likely a continuation of Kang Maksum's test of his invulnerability. Unfortunately, it didn't work this time."*

*Many now accept Kang Zuhdi's conclusion. However, Kang Sofwan and I, who are from the same region and know Kang Maksum and his family well, still can't accept it. We don't want to accept... (Kang Maksum's short story)*

The ending, which emphasizes the death of a senior Islamic boarding school member, demonstrates Gus Mus's desire for worship practices in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Gus Mus's approach is very clever in educating the reader. The story demands that readers reconsider their choice of worship that deviates from Islamic teachings.

K. H. Mustofa's disapproval of this form of worship not taught by the Prophet Muhammad is evident in the story's surprising ending. The tragic death of a student who diligently practiced asceticism is Gus Mus's way of criticizing him. Gus Mus indirectly wants to show that the asceticism practiced by santri, like that of Kang Maksum, has no beneficial value. An example of moderation is also reflected in the short story "Mbok Yem."

*Apparently, Mbok Yem believed that what Mbah Joyo experienced was a blessing from God, related to her good deeds. She explained why she became hysterical when Mbah Joyo disappeared in Muzdalifah. It turned out that Mbok Yem was formerly a prostitute—now "euphemistically" termed a commercial sex worker—and Mbah Joyo was her "customer," patiently bringing her to her senses, freeing her from that debauched life, and marrying her. Then, Mbok Yem and Mbah Joyo began a completely new life. In addition to assisting Mbah Joyo with farming, Mbok Yem sold pecel (traditional vegetable salad) and later expanded to open a small food stall. They saved part of their earnings little by little. They even willingly lived a life of asceticism to achieve their dream of performing the Hajj. (Mbok Yem's short story)*

## **2. The Relevance of Gus Mus's Work as Literature Teaching Material in High School**

Relevance can be seen by examining the following points. a) Compliance with KI-KD (K13) and Learning Outcomes (Independent Curriculum) Substantially, Gus Mus's literary works are relevant to high school Indonesian language learning, especially in the competency of literary appreciation and expression. Moderate Islamic values in his works are in line with the objectives of literature learning which not only emphasize aesthetic aspects, but also character building and social attitudes. In the 2013 Curriculum (KI-KD) Gus Mus's works are relevant to: KI-1 and KI-2: strengthening religious attitudes, tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility; KI-3: understanding the meaning, themes, and values in poetry/short stories. KI-4: presenting the results of interpreting literary texts orally and in writing. Meanwhile, in the Independent Curriculum (Learning Outcomes) literary learning is directed at: a) the ability to interpret, evaluate, and reflect on life values in literary texts, strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, especially the dimensions: faith and piety, global diversity, critical reasoning, and noble character. Gus Mus's work, with its humanistic and inclusive Islamic character, contextually fulfills these objectives. b) Suitability to the Characteristics of High School Students: High school students are in the late adolescent developmental phase, characterized by abstract and reflective thinking skills, a search for self-identity and life values, and sensitivity to issues of justice, humanity, and diversity.

Gus Mus's work is relevant because it uses simple, reflective, and communicative language; conveys social and religious criticism without a dogmatic tone; presents Islam as a blessing, not a threat; and avoids symbolic violence and hate speech. Thus, Gus Mus's work



helps students: understand religion in a mature and dialogical manner; develop empathy across differences; and develop a balanced religious attitude (wasathiyah).

Table 2. Relevance of Moderation Values to Learning Outcomes

Fase	Jenis Teks	Contoh Karya Gus Mus	Capaian Pembelajaran (CP)	Nilai Moderasi Beragama
Fase E (X)	Puisi	<i>“Sajak tentang Kau”</i>	Siswa mampu memahami makna dan amanat puisi serta mengaitkannya dengan pengalaman hidup	Ketulusan beragama, relasi hamba–Tuhan yang humanis
Fase E (X)	Puisi	<i>“Tuhan”</i>	Siswa mampu menafsirkan simbol dan diksi religius secara kritis	Kesederhanaan iman, anti-formalisme
Fase F (XI–XII)	Puisi	<i>“Agama”</i>	Siswa mampu mengevaluasi pesan kritis dalam puisi dan merefleksikannya secara argumentatif	Kritik radikalisme, toleransi
Fase F (XI–XII)	Cerpen	<i>“Kiai Kencing Berdiri”</i>	Siswa mampu menganalisis konflik, tokoh, dan pesan moral cerpen	Anti-fanatisme, kebijaksanaan
Fase F (XI–XII)	Cerpen	<i>“Amplop-Amplop Abu-Abu”</i>	Siswa mampu mengaitkan teks sastra dengan realitas sosial	Kejujuran, keadilan, etika sosial

Through literary learning based on Gus Mus's works, students not only learn to understand texts, but also internalize moderate Islamic values in a reflective and dialogical manner, in accordance with the goals of national education and policies to strengthen religious moderation. Substantially, Gus Mus's literary works are relevant to high school Indonesian language learning, especially in the competency of literary appreciation and expression. The moderate Islamic values in his works are in line with the objectives of literary learning which not only emphasize aesthetic aspects, but also the formation of character and social attitudes.

## V. CONCLUSION

Gus Mus's literary works, including poetry and short stories, are generally rich in educational values. Some poems and short stories specifically emphasize moderate Islamic education. This moderation, in part, rejects extreme left-wing ideologies, as in the short story "Kang Maksum." Others reject extreme right-wing ideologies, as in the poem "Aku

Merindukanmu O Muhammadku" (I Miss You, O Muhammadku), Gus Jakfar's short story, "Mbok Yem," "Eid is Just a Day Away," Gus Muslih. This moderation is conveyed through indirect and entertaining delivery techniques.

This literature, imbued with moderate values, is highly relevant as teaching material in high schools implementing the 2013 curriculum or the Merdeka Curriculum. After observation and data collection, the Indonesian language curriculum incorporates literary studies. In general, the goal of learning literature tends to instill positive values that can shape character. Thus, the relevance of Gus Mus's literary works is met. This is inseparable from the content of Gus Mus's literary works, which are rich in moral teachings that are beneficial for shaping students' character.

## REFERENCES

- Azra, Azyumardi. *Islam Nusantara: Jaringan Global dan Lokal*. Bandung: Mizan, 2017.
- Bisri, Mustofa. *Islam Nusantara: Dari Ushul Fiqh hingga Paham Kebangsaan*. Jakarta: Pustaka Compass, 2015.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. "Islam Moderat Gus Mus." *Studia Islamika* 24, no. 1 (2017): 123–145.
- Djuanda, Dadan. "Pembelajaran Sastra di Sekolah Menengah." *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa* 8, no. 2 (2019): 95–110.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
- Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter*. Jakarta: Kemendikbud, 2020.
- Nurdiyanto, Burhan. *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2018.
- Qaradawi, Yusuf al-. *Fiqh al-Wasatiyyah*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2010.
- Suwardi, Endraswara. *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra*. Yogyakarta: CAPS, 2016.
- Yasa, I Nyoman. *Teori Sastra dan Penerapannya*. Bandung: Karya Putra Darwati, 2012.
- Zulela, MS. *Pembelajaran Sastra Berbasis Karakter*. Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2019.